

---

# ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet

---



29 Hazen Drive, Concord, New Hampshire 03301 • (603) 271-3503 • [www.des.nh.gov](http://www.des.nh.gov)

---

R&L-2

2008

## **The New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP)**

### **NEW HAMPSHIRE'S RIVERS**

From the long, wide Connecticut River, which forms the western boundary of our state, to the short, steep Wildcat Brook in Jackson, New Hampshire's rivers and streams are widely recognized for their outstanding values and diversity. Throughout the years, these rivers have provided a home for a variety of plants and animals, turned the turbines that powered our mills and factories, served as vital transportation routes and recreation areas, and graced our state with their scenic beauty.

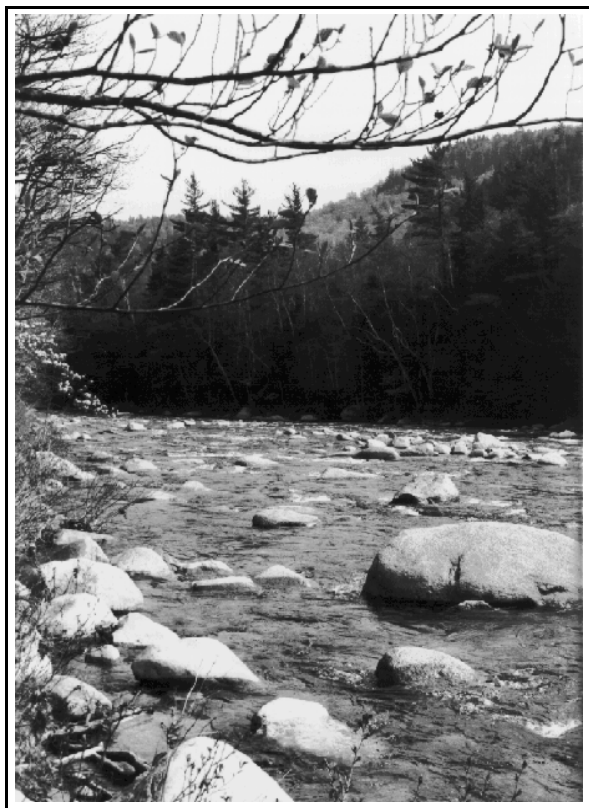
Today our rivers are in even higher demand. Rivers are dammed and diverted to provide public drinking water, flood protection, and hydroelectric power. Growing populations have led to increasing riverfront development and use of our rivers for waste assimilation. Free-flowing rivers are valued for fishing, boating, and nature study.

In 1988, the state legislature responded to the increasing and competing uses of our rivers by creating the New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection Program (RMPP). The purpose of the program is to protect our state's significant river resources for the benefit of present and future generations through a unique combination of state and local resource management and protection.

### **THE PROGRAM**

The Rivers Management and Protection Act of 1988 (RSA 483) established a statewide rivers program based on a two-tier approach to river management and protection: *state* designation of significant rivers and protection of instream values and *local* development and adoption of river corridor management plans to protect shorelines and adjacent lands. The Rivers Management and Protection Program is administered by the N.H.

Department of Environmental Services and is staffed by a rivers coordinator. The act also established the statewide Rivers Management Advisory Committee (RMAC). The RMACs members represent a wide range of river interests and work closely with DES in an advisory capacity.



## STATE DESIGNATION

**Nomination:** A river or river segment may be nominated for state designation by any citizen or organization in the state. Sponsors must submit a description of the river's values and characteristics to the Commissioner of DES. Each river nomination is evaluated by the DES Commissioner to ensure that the river's designation would be consistent with the purpose of RSA 483, the Rivers Management and Protection Act. If the Commissioner determines that the river or river segment meets the criteria in RSA 483:6, the nomination is forwarded to the state legislature.

**Legislative Action:** The final step in the designation process is the state legislature's consideration of a bill to designate the nominated river. When the bill gets passed and signed by the governor, this formally designates the river into the RMPP. Each designated river is protected and managed to maintain and enhance instream river values such as water quality and instream flows.

**Local Implementation:** An important and unique feature of the Rivers Management and Protection Program is the opportunity for municipalities to participate, through local river management advisory committees, in multi-town river corridor planning and implementation efforts. A local river management advisory committee (LAC) is appointed for each designated river. Each LAC is comprised of representatives from each riverfront municipality and is responsible for developing a local river corridor management plan and commenting on activities affecting the river that require state or federal permits. Representatives come from a broad range of interests, including but not limited to local government, business, conservation, recreation, agriculture, and riparian landowners. This diversity helps bring a variety of perspectives to bear on resource protection and development issues.

While state designation provides instream protection, the local plan addresses the management and protection of the shoreline and adjacent lands that make up the river corridor. Because the plan is locally developed, adopted and implemented, it reflects the specific needs, interests and concerns of local citizens. The Department of Environmental Services provides technical assistance to the local river management advisory committee and other interested local and regional groups and officials on corridor management planning and other issues.

## PROTECTED RIVERS

As of this date, there are 15 rivers or river segments included in the Rivers Management and Protection Program.

### Designated Rivers

Ammonoosuc River	Exeter River	Pemigewasset River
Ashuelot River	Lamprey River	Piscataquog River
Cold River	Isinglass River	Saco River
Connecticut River	Merrimack River (Lower)	Souhegan
Contoocook River	Merrimack River (Upper)	Swift River

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **How does a designation protect a river?**

The Rivers Management and Protection Program provides certain instream protection measures for designated rivers and a river classification system to match general river characteristics with the specific protection measures. Rivers can be classified as natural, rural, rural-community or community. For each river classification, state law establishes specific protection measures related to dams, hydroelectric energy facilities, channel alterations, water quality, protected instream flows, interbasin water transfers, siting of solid and hazardous waste facilities, and recreational use of the river. Local river corridor management plans make recommendations regarding the use and conservation of the shoreline and adjacent lands which make up the river corridor.

### **What does the Rivers Management and Protection Program provide that is not offered by existing state laws and programs?**

River designation increases public awareness of the river and creates a local planning and management effort centered specifically on the river and its resources. The establishment of a local river management advisory committee creates a forum for multi-town and multi-interest coordination of efforts to protect and manage valuable river resources and creates an incentive for the riverfront communities to adopt and implement local river corridor management plans. Designation can also promote public interest and a sense of respect or stewardship for the river and its resources by the citizens and local officials in the adjacent communities. As a result, future development is more apt to take place in a manner which assures that the valued river resources are maintained. A state designated river may also be targeted by various assistance programs, thereby increasing the probability that the efforts of various local river interests will be successful.

### **As a riverfront landowner, how will I benefit from the Rivers Management and Protection Program?**

Issues such as trespassing, litter, liability and erosion affect or infringe upon the rights of riparian landowners. River designation can increase respect for property rights and heighten recognition of the valuable contribution which landowners already make in river protection. Designation can also promote greater public understanding and awareness of the unique problems and issues faced by landowners. The resulting increase in public understanding and interest in issues important to property owners can bring technical assistance, funding and other support to help address and solve such problems.

### **Will designation affect local land use control in the river corridor? (Are my rights as a riverfront landowner in jeopardy?)**

No. By law, the only land use protection measures are those for solid and hazardous waste facilities. The Rivers Management and Protection Act (RSA 483) strengthens existing waste management regulations on designated rivers. There are no other development restrictions in the Act; what is a local decision before a river is designated is a local decision following designation. The Act specifically states that “nothing in this chapter shall be interpreted to preempt any land and zoning authority granted to municipal bodies ... .”

**For further information about the N.H. Rivers Management and Protection Program** go to <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wmb/rivers/index.htm> or contact Steve Couture, Rivers Coordinator, 29 Hazen Drive, PO Box 95, Concord, NH 03302-0095; (603) 271-8801; [steven.couture@des.nh.gov](mailto:steven.couture@des.nh.gov).